

Assemblyman
PAUL KORETZ
Forty-second Assembly District



proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks

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Fire Safe Cigarettes Coming to California

Governor signs AB 178 (Koretz) Requiring Only Self-Extinguishing Cigarettes to Be Sold in State

(Sacramento) – Assembly Bill 178, legislation by Assemblyman Paul Koretz requiring only fire safe cigarettes to be sold in California, was signed into law today by Governor Schwarzenegger. The new law will reduce deaths and injuries caused by cigarette-related fires.

AB 178 prohibits the sale, manufacture, or distribution of cigarettes in the state that do not meet the fire safe standards established by the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) protocol for measuring the ignition strength of cigarettes. Fire safe cigarettes are wrapped in a special paper with ultra thin bands that work like speed bumps to slow the burning of cigarettes when not being puffed. However, they look and taste like regular cigarettes and are not more costly to manufacture.

“This new law is a breakthrough for California. I commend the Governor for recognizing that this is an easy way to save lives,” said Koretz. “Now that our residents will have access to a safer cigarette product, we can reduce deadly cigarette fires and save innocent lives. My hope is that other states quickly follow suit,” said Koretz.

AB 178 is adapted from a New York law which went into effect last year when the cigarette industry finally met the required standards for manufacturing a fire safe cigarette. Vermont enacted similar legislation earlier this year. The New York experience shows that tobacco companies are able to manufacture safer cigarettes with little difficulty. Further, contrary to opponent’s assertions, a Harvard School of Public Health study found earlier this year that the state did not lose revenue as a result of requiring fire safe cigarettes.

During the past decade in California alone, cigarettes caused more than 25,000 fires, killing 700 people and injuring almost 100 firefighters. While the law would not make cigarettes fire proof, it would dramatically reduce the number of cigarette fire deaths in the state each year. Newly available data shows a 48 percent reduction in fire deaths following implementation of New York’s regulations on June 28, 2004.

“This is one of the most far-reaching, life-saving measures ever passed in California. My sincere thanks go out to Mr. Koretz and to the Governor,” said Andrew McGuire, Executive Director of the Trauma Foundation, based at San Francisco General Hospital. Mr. McGuire has been working to pass fire safe cigarette legislation in California for 27 years.

AB 178 had broad support among a diverse group of advocates, including firefighters, physicians, insurance companies, property owners, consumer groups and health care organizations. The legislation will take effect on January 1, 2007.

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